
PRESS RELEASE

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GOVERNOR SIGNS LEGISLATION CRITICAL TO MEETING SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA HOUSING NEEDS

Senate Bill 12 Creates New Pilot Program Designed To Improve Effectiveness Of Regional Housing Needs Assessment

LOS ANGELES – This week, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed into law a measure sponsored by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) that will greatly facilitate local government planning for housing development throughout the six-county Southern California region. The measure, sponsored by Senator Alan Lowenthal (D-Long Beach), provides for the establishment of a new pilot program that allows for streamlining of the state-mandated Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) program by SCAG for the 187 cities and six counties it comprises. The purpose of the RHNA program is to set forth housing need goals for all socio-economic levels in each jurisdiction.

Existing state law establishes the RHNA process as a key mechanism for both state and local governments to use in terms of establishing future housing needs. Current law also requires that SCAG oversee the allocation of future housing need to jurisdictions within the Southern California region. In order to meet the statutory deadlines in current law, as well as to improve the overall process of determining future housing need in local jurisdictions, SCAG worked with Senator Lowenthal to introduce the bill as an urgency measure.

“The enactment of SB 12 represents a critically important milestone in Southern California’s ongoing efforts to meet our residents’ housing needs,” said SCAG President and Los Angeles County Supervisor Yvonne Burke. “We are now in a position to more effectively plan for future housing need in a manner that reflects the projected growth for Southern California.”

SB 12, which was approved by overwhelming majorities in both the State Senate and Assembly, streamlines and improves the RHNA process in a number of important ways. First, the RHNA pilot program is designed to achieve ‘smart growth’ principals by integrating the growth forecast process into the housing allocation process. Next, it provides for the early use of existing planning factors in housing law to help determine the amount and distribution of growth between subregions, cities and counties.

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This approach provides greater local input and flexibility to participate in the process that will determine each jurisdiction's housing allocation.

Finally, and significantly, the pilot program provides for one round of appeals and adds the existing planning factors in housing law as a basis for appealing an allocation of need. This provision ensures that lengthy and costly multiple appeals of housing allocation are avoided so that a functioning RHNA process can address the acute regional undersupply of housing.

SCAG released a draft housing allocation plan to cities and counties within the region in February and is currently in the process of considering appeals and revision requests from various jurisdictions. A final RHNA allocation plan is scheduled to be approved for submission to the state by July, and local governments will then have until June 30, 2008 to make the appropriate updates to their respective General Plan Housing Elements.

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